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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: FEAR HINDERS MEDIA COVERAGE OF GUINEA MUTINY

Classified By: AMCLEAN FOR REASONS 1.4(b) AND (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During the military mutiny of May 2007, media coverage was more notable for its absence than anything else. RTG, the state-run radio and television service, was noteworthy for its initial lack of coverage of the mutiny and inability to act without government approval, while private radio acted very guardedly. This is a sign of the limits of real freedom of the press in Guinea and is a result of government harassment and intimidation of the media going back to the strike of January-February 2007. End summary.

State-Run Radio/Television

¶2. (SBU) Journalists working for state-run RTG told PAS that the events of May-June 2008 were "delicate" or "complicated," which helped explain the lack of initial coverage by the network. They said they could not report on the mutiny because they did not have access to good sources of information involved in the mutiny, and could not get their equipment to the source of the events. One journalist said they did not know "who was who" or "who was doing what" and this prevented them from covering the story.

¶3. (SBU) More tellingly, they said they were not told to report on the events and that as a public service, this prevented them from providing coverage. These journalists noted that private radio stations did not have this hindrance from above, which is why they were able to report on events and stay out in front of the news stories. Only when government officials started dealing with the situation, such as Joint Chief of Staff General Diara Camara's meeting with the mutineers and meetings involving President Conte, did RTG begin covering events.

¶4. (C) The reporters also noted that it is risky to report on the military, especially when there are problems in the ranks. If something happened to the reporter, such as being targeted for reprisals by the military, there would be no one to whom they could complain. A senior person at RTG tried to explain RTG's failure to cover the mutiny by saying that the military has its own reporters to cover military issues.

¶5. (C) According to this same senior director, during the mutiny, the mutineers came to RTG and demanded coverage, but the Minister of Communication and New Information Technologies, Issa Conde, was reluctant. The mutineers pressured Conde into allowing a team of RTG journalists to go to Camp Alpha Yaya. They reported on the hostage situation involving General Sampil and his bodyguard. From then on RTG covered all of the meetings between the mutineers and the GOG.

Private Radio

¶6. (SBU) Initially, private radio was no more daring in its coverage of the mutiny than RTG. None of the private radio stations reported on the events of May until one of the presenters on Radio Familia FM started talking about the mutiny during his call in show. It was during this show that the mutineers contacted the station and asked to make a

statement. The mutineers also gave a press release to the station.

¶7. (C) At first, the presenter was hesitant to address the issue, but finally he conducted an interview with the leader of the mutiny, Claude Pivi, aka Coplan. Prime Minister Souare heard the interview and called the presenter to his office to talk about Pivi. During this conversation, Pivi called the presenter to demand why he was speaking to the PM. The presenter passed the phone to the PM and he had a tense conversation with Pivi. It was after this that the government began negotiating with the mutineers. There were no repercussions for the radio station for providing this coverage.

Comment

¶8. (C) The sparse initial coverage of the mutiny shows that there is as much fear of the military at RTG as at private radio. RTG is not willing to act on controversial stories involving the government or military unless given direction from above, i.e. the Minister of Communication. In this case, the Minister of Communication seemed as much at a loss as anybody as to how to handle the coverage, did not provide strong guidance to RTG and did not inform them to cover the mutiny, which prevented them from doing so.

¶9. (C) Private radio, in particular Radio Familia FM, was more willing to risk coverage of the mutiny, which probably helped encourage dialogue between the mutineers and the government. Private radio is still suffering the chilling effect of the January-February 2007 strike, when one radio station, Radio FM Liberte, was ransacked by soldiers and Radio Familia FM was threatened with similar treatment if they didn't go off the air. Both stations had been doing "man on the street" live interviews during altercations between the military and civilians. In addition, the CNC, the government media regulator, suspended a newspaper in October 2007 after they reported that soldiers were going to demonstrate if they did not receive unpaid back wages.

¶10. (C) Despite the risks, private radio played a positive role in eventually reporting on the mutiny and allowing the mutineers to vent their grievances on air. This gave the mutineers an outlet that they undoubtedly would never have had with RTG. Radio Familia FM also played an important role in getting the mutineers and the government to talk, and in fact the first known conversation between the Prime Minister and Claude Pivi happened during the above mentioned meeting in the PM's office with the Familia reporter.

¶11. (C) During the mutiny, the GOG proved themselves once again inept at speaking to the media and getting a message out to the people. However, once they started speaking to the media, starting with a statement read by General Camara, the situation started calming down. It should be noted that General Camara participated in media training for military leaders organized by the Defense Attache in June 2007. Post is looking into other options to provide training to government officials to improve their communication with the public. End comment.

CARTER